

Note from the Editors

Summer 2024

Dear Readers,

Over the years, in our role as editors, we have immensely enjoyed assisting authors in organizing, formatting, and optimizing manuscripts for publication. However, the true reward in this endeavor is having a front row seat to the remarkable work being completed by students, clinicians, and educators in our profession. Bearing witness to your passion, tenacity, advocacy, and innovation for acute care occupational therapy is inspiring and we are proud to highlight your work and accomplishments.

Manuscript submissions across all categories and methodological approaches continue to interest and excite the JACOT editorial board, however articles in this current issue have us reflecting specifically on the value of qualitative research. Qualitative research deals primarily with studying the nature of a phenomena and exploring the “why” (Busetto et al., 2020). JACOT has published qualitative research in the form of original research, case studies, and quality improvement projects, with methodology that includes interviews, phenomenology, surveys, and observations.

The core values of occupational therapy are centered on viewing a person as an integrated and contextualized being who engages in occupation (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2020). Occupations are deeply personal and meaningful and can be influenced by a variety of factors which either interrupt or support those occupations and influence engagement and participation (AOTA, 2020). Qualitative research is a particularly relevant approach to explore these factors and better understand a client’s situation and meaning-making with focus on values, context, time and motivations, rather than just concentrating on a condition or diagnosis (Borrell et al., 2012).

Given the rapidly changing nature of acute care practice and the complexities of the patients we serve, qualitative research can be a valuable method to explore the perspectives and experiences of our patients and their caregivers. It can also be a powerful tool in assessing and improving service delivery, exploring our roles within the acute care team, and understanding our own experiences and perspectives as occupational therapy practitioners. Readers of qualitative research benefit from the rich descriptions, direct accounts, and narrative type writing (Smith, 2018). These aspects create an element of transferability, where a reader may consider adopting something that the research has identified into their own practice (Smith, 2018). That is, the stories we tell in qualitative research have the power to unite occupational therapy practitioners, provide validation, or spark reconsideration through critical thinking or analytical practices (Smith, 2018).

While qualitative research should absolutely be an integral part of the research landscape, researchers and readers alike should understand the limitations with this approach. Often sample size, location and time aspects narrow the scope of the findings and create the potential for bias. Given these and other factors, qualitative findings offer limited generalizability and cannot provide findings that support any sort of causation or confidence in specific relationships. Conclusions should not make heavy or bold inferences and researchers should avoid inserting their own opinions or assumptions (Johnson et al., 2020).

Producing credible and rigorous qualitative research doesn't happen by accident. It begins in the planning stages and continues through all phases of the research process. A few major components for high quality qualitative research include:

1. Begin with a clear foundational framework and select a study design that aligns with your approach.
2. Consider best practice in sampling, sample size, and recruitment of participants when constructing in the methodological design.
3. Bias should be mitigated throughout all phases. All potential biases should also be documented in the limitations section of the manuscript.
4. When possible, peer review, triangulation, audit trails, reflexive critique and technology/software should be used in the data collection and analysis process to promote trustworthiness and credibility.

(From Johnson et al., 2020)

This **Summer 2024 issue** exemplifies the variety of patient populations served and the wide scope of acute care occupational therapy. We are thrilled to provide original research, case study, and quality improvement articles in several different facets of the acute care setting. This issue provides a description of experiences and patient caseload in general medicine and provides insight into educating occupational practitioners on bariatric equipment and patient care. It also covers a quality improvement project that shows the value of programming and education on sleep hygiene interventions within a given acute unit as well as themes identified from the lived experience of embedded occupational and physical therapists delivering rehabilitation services in an intensive care unit at a large level 1 trauma center.

Best regards,

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